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Job Description

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An accountant with sufficient imagination to see things clearly describes the public practitioner's role in the ordinary course of human events.

JOB DESCRIPTION

By Charma Leonard
Columbus, Ohio

There was a moment recently when I allowed myself the luxury of just sitting quietly, and my mind was filled with meditative musings.

Suddenly, there appeared beside me a slight and shadowy figure, whose familiarity startled me. As I searched the youthful face, I realized who she was. The girl that I used to be was visiting the woman she had become.

"What have you done with my life?" she asked. "Where is the New York penthouse and the summer home by the sea? Where are the best-selling novels, and the movies made from them?"

I must admit I lowered my eyes before her reproachful gaze, and hung my head. "Well, you see," I stuttered, "I started out as a news reporter, I really did. But, I was in love and I had to quit my job to join my husband before he went overseas. You remember how it was during the war?"

"And I couldn't find a writing job in New Jersey, so I became a secretary. You'll have to admit that a steady salary is more comfortable than starving to write a book. I did enjoy being a 'Girl Friday' too, until one day I typed a financial statement."

As I met my youthful visitor's eyes once more, I could see no comprehension. I cowered again, and groped for words of explanation. I did want her pleased with me.

"And then my babies arrived, and I was enveloped in a maternal mist of diapers, bottles, colic, scales, baby laughter and delightful dreams for their future. Inevitably, of course, the day dawned when I realized I must pursue my own dreams, but I do confess the idea for 'The Great American Novel' had not materialized, so I picked up my accounting studies," I continued apologetically.

"Opportunities presented themselves, and one thing led to another, and suddenly I was a Public Accountant with a calculator and a business of my own." My own revelations began to enlighten me. I lifted my head and met

her eyes head-on, feeling no further need to apologize.

"I realize that I compromised with time and circumstances, but I do tell stories still, you know. You see, as the figures flow from journal to ledger and through calculator to statement, they tell the story of business—its initial investment, where it comes from, source and amount of income, and what happens to it."

"Sometimes, I elaborate with percentages and other supplemental details. Many times my stories have a surprise ending, and there are times when my readers wait in suspense from month to month for my current installments. It is true that the harsh black and white reality of my figures do not permit poetry, but my profession seeks the truth, and, while in pursuit of it, we become acquainted with the dreams, triumphs and despair behind our figures."

"During the tax seasons my stories are short, biographical sketches of individuals. All important events in a given year are included in these stories—new jobs, increased income, new babies, new addresses, illnesses, major casualties and deaths."

"Once in a while I write a detective story when a cheater is discovered somewhere. This takes real sleuthing, and much information has to be accumulated to substantiate a fraud."

I smiled indulgently at my youthful guest. "I know my life doesn't compare to the glamorous existence of a best-selling author, and my suburban ranch is no match for a New York penthouse. But, I have learned a great deal since you and I parted company. I know I am not as smart as you thought I was. I do not worry about making mistakes as much as you did, because life and accounting have taught me that there is always something you can do about them."

"I have made so many fine friends, and learned the peculiarities of many businesses. My income has been good, and I have been able to arrange my work hours so that it conflicts the least with my home and family. In fact, you know, I could write a book," I said. This comment, however, was lost upon my impatient friend, who had departed into the deepening shadows.